

With One Voice 2007

America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy

A Periodic National Survey

By Bill Albert

February 2007

www.teenpregnancy.org

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Introduction

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy has been conducting and releasing survey data since the organization's inception in 1996. *With One Voice 2007* is the fifth in a series of national surveys dating back to 2001 that have asked adults and teens a consistent, core set of questions about teen pregnancy and related issues. These surveys provide valuable insights for parents, program leaders, funders, policy-makers, and the media about teen pregnancy and factors that influence teens' decisions about sex.

As we have noted in previous *With One Voice* publications, the National Campaign has undertaken these nationally representative surveys for two primary reasons. First, we think it is important to assess regularly the content and direction of American opinion on teen pregnancy and share these findings widely. Second, we see these surveys of public *opinion* as a critical supplement to the *behavioral* data collected regularly by the federal government through such projects as the National Survey of Family Growth and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Simply put, because attitudes can affect behavior, our regular surveys of attitudes about teen sex and pregnancy greatly enhance our understanding of the teen pregnancy problem and what to do about it.

Readers should note the following about this publication:

- The questions in this poll were developed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- The exact wording of the survey questions and respondents' answers are provided throughout.
- As a general matter, survey results are reported for teens aged 12-19 and adults aged 20 and over unless otherwise noted.
- Some subgroup differences, such as age and gender, are noted when these subgroup differences appear compelling.
- Racial/ethnic differences are not presented here but will be featured in an upcoming report from the National Campaign.
- Where available, results from previous National Campaign surveys are presented in some of the charts in this publication.
- Some of the responses to various questions do not quite total 100 percent. This is due to our decision not to report—for the sake of clarity and simplicity—the percentages of respondents who answered “don't know” or refused to answer altogether, unless such responses seemed important.

Taken together, we think these survey results show that the majority of adults and teens hold a practical, common sense view about teen sexual behavior and strategies for reducing early pregnancy and childbearing—one that has changed little over the years we have conducted surveys. For example, adults and teens do not view abstinence and contraception as competing strategies. Instead, they continue to strongly believe that young people should be encouraged to delay sexual activity *and* should also be given information about contraception. These findings also provide parents with compelling evidence of their influence over their children's sexual decisions and underscore some of the remaining challenges in convincing young people to delay pregnancy and parenthood. Visit www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/data/polling.asp for more information about these findings and past National Campaign surveys.

Headline

PARENTS

- Teens continue to say that parents most influence their decisions about sex.
- For the first time in National Campaign polling, adults in general now believe that parents most influence teens' decisions about sex.
- Parents of teens, however, continue to underestimate the influence they have over their children's decisions about sex and overestimate the influence of friends and the media.
- Most teens (64%) say they share their parents' values about sex.
- Although the vast majority of parents of teens (89%) say they have had a helpful conversation with their children about delaying sex and avoiding teen pregnancy, fewer teens (71%) report similar conversations with their parents. Even so, the proportion of teens who say they have had a helpful conversation with their parents on these topics has increased since our 2004 survey.

ABSTINENCE

- An overwhelming majority of adults (93%) and teens (90%) continue to believe that providing young people with a strong abstinence message is important.

CONTRACEPTION

- Adults (73%) and teens (56%) also continue to believe that young people need more information about abstinence and contraception, rather than either/or.

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

- Most sexually experienced teens (60%) wish they had waited longer to have intercourse.
- Fully 75% of teens do not think it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

- Most teens (62%) and adults (75%) believe that teen boys often receive the message that they are "expected to have sex."
- Teens (59%) and adults (74%) also believe that teen girls often receive the message that "attracting boys and looking sexy is one of the most important things they can do."
- When it comes to talking about sex, most teens (65%) and adults (61%) believe that parents send one message to their sons and a different message to their daughters.

RELIGION

- A large majority of adults (64%) and teens (76%) believe that religious leaders and groups should be doing more to help prevent teen pregnancy.

SOCIAL NORMS

- About half of teens (48%) say they have never thought about what their life would be like if they got/got someone pregnant as a teen.
- Some 29% of teens and 25% of adults say that teen pregnancy and parenthood in their community are "no big deal."
- Sixteen percent of teens and adults say being a teen parent would help or not affect teens reaching their future goals.

MEDIA

- Most teens (75%) agree that when a TV show or character experiences teen pregnancy, it makes them think more about the consequences of sex.
- Most teens (76%) also wish the media showed more or talked more about the consequences of sex, including teen pregnancy.

Summary

PARENTS

Teens say that parents most influence their decisions about sex but parents of teens underestimate their influence in this area.

Teens continue to say that parents (47%) influence their decisions about sex more than friends (18%), religious leaders (7%), siblings (5%), teachers and sex educators (4%), or the media (3%)—a finding that has remained constant in National Campaign surveys over the years.

For the first time since the National Campaign has conducted surveys, adults in general now say that *parents* hold more influence (40%) than other sources, including friends (37%), the media (10%), or teachers and sex educators (3%). Parents of teens, however, are a different story. They continue to underestimate their own influence (only 34% believe that parents most influence teens' decisions about sex), and overestimate the influence of such sources as friends (41%) and the media (13%).

Parents are having helpful conversations about sex with their teenaged children — but there seems to be disagreement about just how often. Some 71% of teens (69% of boys and 73% of girls) report that they have had a helpful conversation with their parents about delaying sex and avoiding teen pregnancy. It is worth noting that this is a marked increase in the proportion of teens who said in our 2004 that they had had a helpful conversation on these topics with their parents. But many more parents—nine in ten parents of teens (89%)—report that they have had a helpful conversation with their children about sex and teen pregnancy.

Parents still need help. Parents admit they need help discussing sex with their kids, and teens agree. The vast majority of parents (82%) and two-thirds of teens (66%) agree that when it

comes to talking about sex, parents often don't know what to say, how to say it, or when to start the conversation.

Teens share their parents' values. Most teens (64%) and adults (75%) believe that they share the same values about sex. Only 3% of teens say they don't know their parents' values about sex.

ABSTINENCE AND CONTRACEPTION

Support remains overwhelming for abstinence messages. The overwhelming majority of adults (93%) and teens (90%) think it is important for teens to be given a strong message that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school. Eight in ten adults (79%) and two-thirds (68%) of teens characterize such messages as “very important.”

Adults and teens also strongly believe young people need more information about both abstinence and contraception. When asked whether teens should be getting more information about abstinence, contraception, or both, three-quarters of adults (73%) and about six in ten teens (56%) said young people should be getting information about *both*, rather than either/or. Teens generally wanted less information about abstinence alone than did adults.

Mixed messages? “Don't have sex but if you do you should use birth control or protection.” When asked if that statement encouraged teens to have sex, about half of teens (53%) and adults (50%) disagreed. On the other hand, almost half of teens (44%) and adults (46%) said such a message *does* encourage teens to have sex—a proportion that has grown since our last survey.

Young people provide lots of reasons why they do not use contraception when they have

sex. Teens and adults (18% and 16% respectively) agree that the primary reason teens do not use contraception is fear of their parents finding out. Teens also cite such things as embarrassment and drug and alcohol use as reasons young people do not use contraception when they have sex.

Teen boys and girls do not fully agree on who decides if contraception is to be used. Teen boys (69%) are far more likely than teen girls (50%) to say the decision to use contraception is shared equally by both partners. Some 39% of teen girls and 21% of teen boys say it is girls who usually decide. Few teen girls (7%) or boys (6%) believe boys usually decide if contraception is to be used.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Boys are expected to have sex... Most teens (58% of boys and 66% of girls) and adults (75%) believe that teen boys often get the message that they are *expected* to have sex.

Girls are expected to look sexy... A distressing six in ten teens (61% of boys and 57% of girls) and fully three-quarters of adults (74%) believe that teen girls often receive the message that attracting boys and looking sexy is one of the most important things girls can do.

...And parents are sending different messages to both. Parents admit (61%) and teens acknowledge (65% of girls and 65% of boys) that when it comes to talking about sex, parents send one message to their sons and a different message to their daughters.

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

Virginity. Three quarters of teens (73% of boys and 78% of girls) do not believe it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins. A far smaller proportion of adults—just over half (54%)—agree.

Many teens say they have never really thought about what their life would be like if they got pregnant/got someone pregnant as a teen. Almost half of teens (48%) overall—

including 50% of boys and 45% of girls—say they have not given teen parenthood any in-depth thought.

A significant minority of adults and teens believe that being a teen parent would either *help* teens reach their goals or would not affect them reaching their goals. Sixteen percent of both adults and teens believe that being a teen parent would either *help* young people reach their goals (8% adults, 6% teens) or would not affect their reaching their goals (8% adults, 10% teens). Most adults and teens say being a teen parent would at least delay (35% adults, 41% teens) or prevent young people (41% adults, 40% teens) from reaching their future goals.

Social norms and teen pregnancy. About one-quarter of adults (25%) and almost one-third of teens (29%) characterize teen pregnancy and parenthood in their community as “no big deal.”

Many adults say they have become more opposed to teens having sex. A majority of adults (52%) say their views about teens having sex have remained unchanged in the past several years. However, 40% say they have become more opposed to teens having sex. Only 4% report becoming less opposed in recent years.

RELIGION

Adults and teens want religious leaders and communities to do more. It may be surprising for some to learn that teens (76%)—even more than adults (64%)—want religious leaders and groups to do more to help prevent teen pregnancy.

RELATIONSHIPS

Adults and teens do not agree on the extent to which it is appropriate for teens to be in a relationship with someone three or more years older. Six in ten adults (60%) do *not* think it is okay for teens to be in a relationship with someone three or more years older. Teens have a more sanguine take on older

partners. About half (51%) say such relationships are not appropriate and 45% think they are okay.

MEDIA

Media matters. Few would disagree that media helps shape the social script of teenagers' lives—what's hot, what's not, what behavior seems “normal,” what seems out of the mainstream, etc. And teens seem to spend plenty of time consuming media that is helping shape their social script. Research from the Kaiser Family Foundation (see *Generation*

M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year Olds, www.kff.org) suggests that adolescents aged 8-18 spend more than forty hours each week consuming media. Even so, *how* the media sets the social script for teens may be more nuanced than many realize.

Three-quarters of teens (68% of boys and 82% of girls) say that when a TV show or character they like deals with teen pregnancy, it makes them think more about the consequences of sex. It is also the case that most adults (72%) and teens (76%) wish the media showed more or talked more about the consequences of sex, including teen pregnancy.

Methodology

Data presented in *With One Voice 2007* are drawn from two national surveys—one with teens and one with adults (some of whom are parents of teens, some of whom are not). Both surveys were conducted by International Communications Research (ICR), an independent research company (visit www.icrsurvey.com for more information). Based in Media, Pennsylvania, ICR has conducted market research since 1983 and has designed thousands of custom marketing and opinion polling studies for a diverse group of clients from non-profit and financial services firms to entertainment and media outlets.

The adult survey was conducted via telephone by ICR and is weighted to provide a nationally representative estimate of the adult population, aged 20 and older. Field work for this survey was conducted between September 29 and October 6, 2006. Telephone interviews were conducted by ICR with 1,162 adults aged 20 and older. This survey was done as part of a national, twice-weekly telephone omnibus survey using a fully-replicated, stratified, single-

state random digit dialed (RDD) sample of households with telephones. Sample telephone numbers are computer-generated. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.87%.

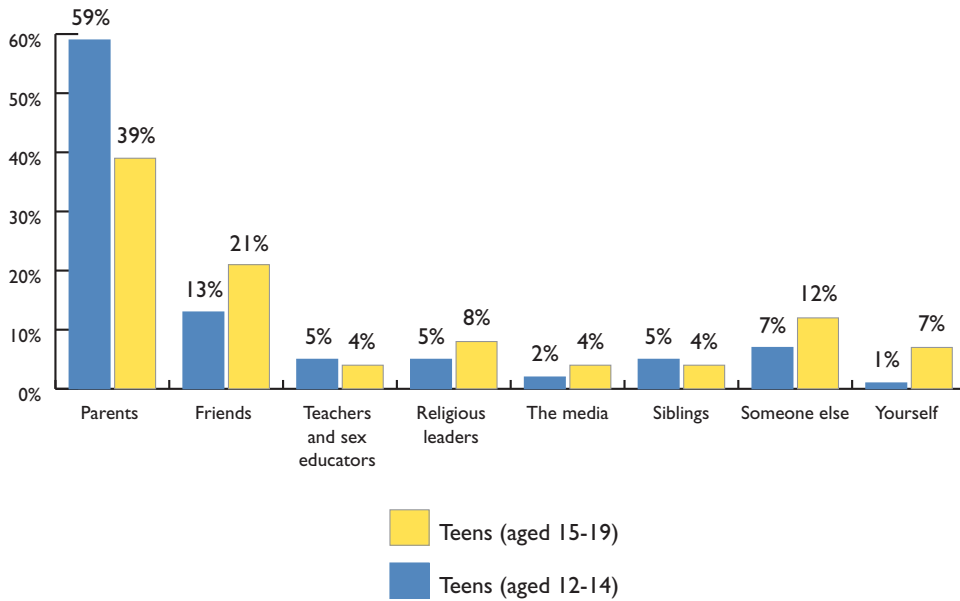
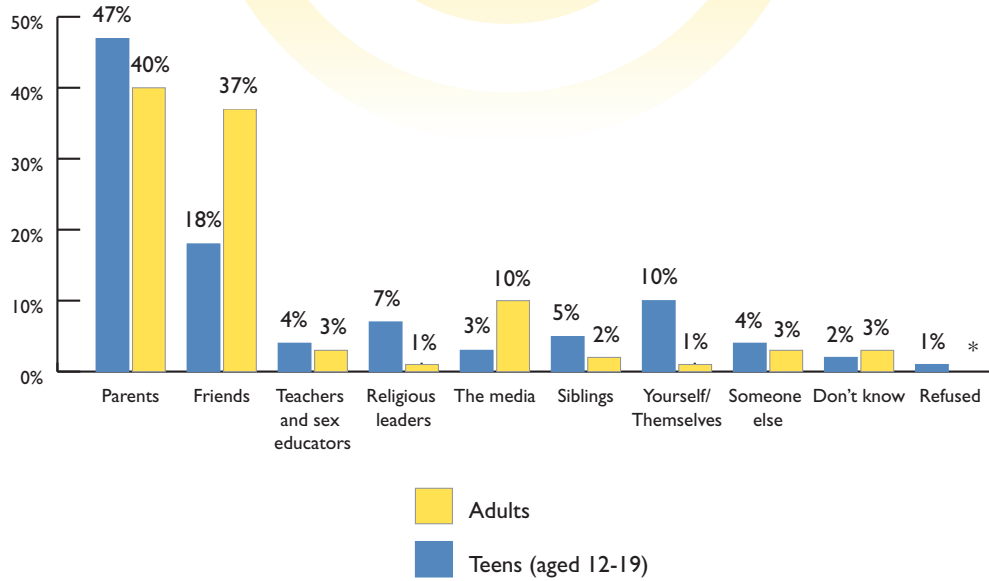
The teen survey was also conducted via telephone by ICR and is weighted to provide a nationally representative estimate of young people aged 12-19. Field work for this survey was conducted between September 29 and October 15, 2006. Telephone interviews were conducted by ICR with 1,037 young people aged 12-19. The sample for this survey was drawn using two different methods. The first sample source used RDD. As a second sample source, a database of households with teenagers 12-19 years old was tapped. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.04%.

All questions were conducted using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The CATI system ensures that all questions are rotated and that when answer options are presented, they are also rotated. This rotating eliminates “question position” bias.

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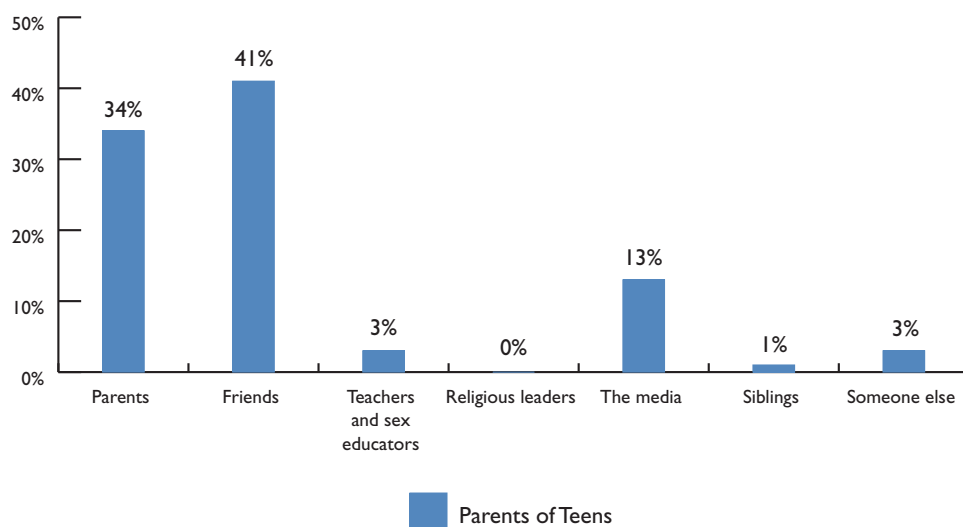
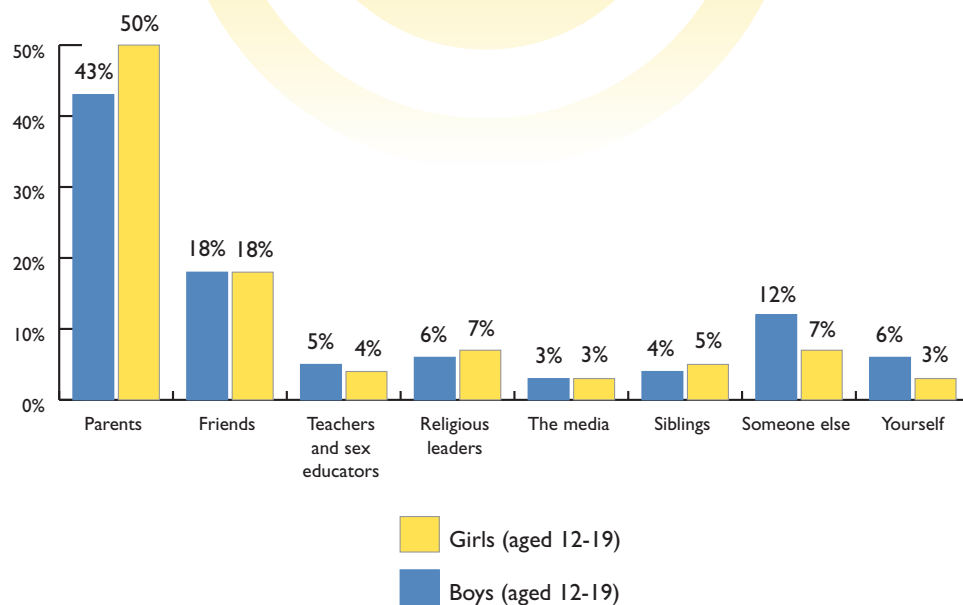
CHART 1

When it comes to your/teens' decisions about sex, who is most influential? Is it...?



Parents and Other Adults

CHART I
(continued)



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CHART I
(continued)

Teens (aged 12-19)	2004	2003
Parents	37	45
Friends	33	31
Teachers and sex educators	4	6
Religious leaders	7	7
The media	5	4
Siblings	6	1
Yourself	3	3
Someone else	3	1
Don't know	3	1
Refused	*	—

Adults	2004	2003
Parents	28	32
Friends	47	48
Teachers and sex educators	2	4
Religious leaders	2	3
The media	12	11
Siblings	3	NA
Someone else	1	1
Themselves	1	—
Don't know	4	2
Refused	*	—

Parents and Other Adults

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

The survey results reported here on parental influence are notable both for what has remained the same and what has changed from previous National Campaign surveys. First, teens continue to say that parents *most* influence their decisions about sex—a finding consistent with all previous National Campaign surveys. In fact, teens surveyed this year are *more likely* than those in previous surveys to say that parents most influence their sexual decisions.

What seems to have changed is the beliefs of adults. Adults in general no longer underestimate the influence of parents. For the first time since the National Campaign began commissioning its periodic surveys in 2001, adults now believe parents influence teens' decisions about sex more than friends, teachers, the media, and other sources. It just may be that all the recent focus on parents—for example the widely known public service campaign, “Parents: The Anti-Drug”—seems to be working. However, it is important to note that when it comes to influencing their children's decisions about sex, parents of teens (a subset of adults more generally) continue to underestimate their own influence and overestimate the influence of the media, friends, and others.

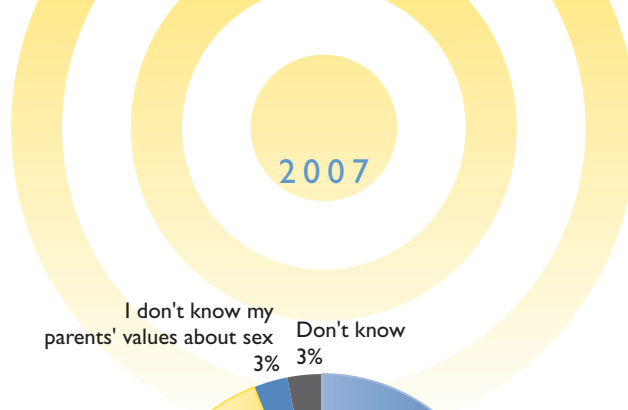
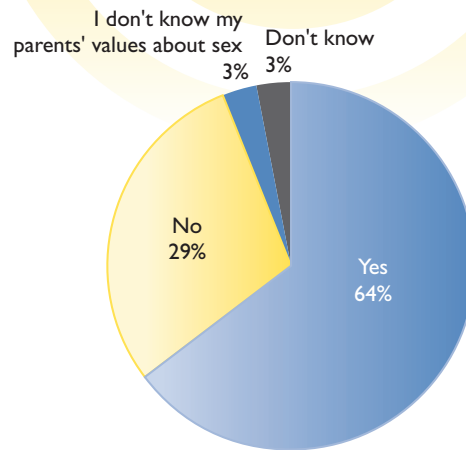


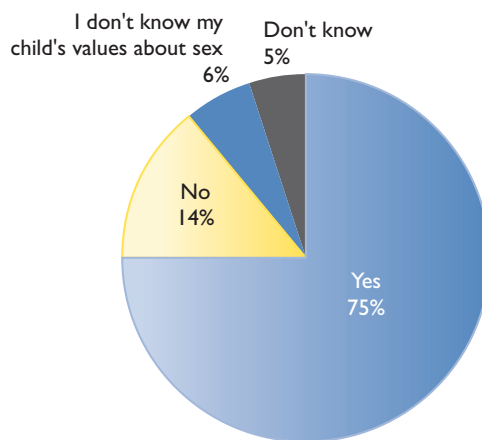
CHART 2

Do you share your parents' values about sex?



Teens (aged 12-19)

Do your children share your values about sex?



Adults

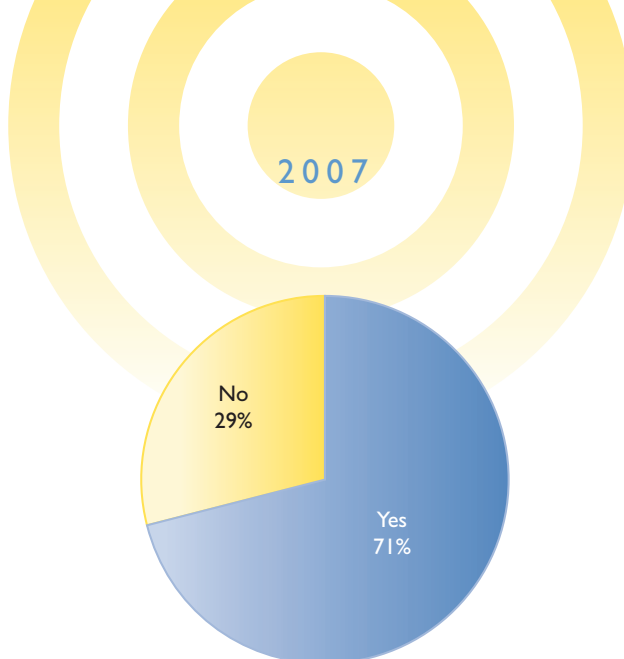
Parents and Other Adults

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

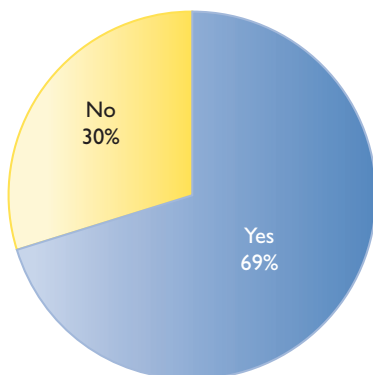
Not only do teens say parents most influence their decisions about sex (see chart one), but about six in ten say they share their parents' values about sex. Parents of teens who are skeptical of their own influence should take particular note of this finding. These data also suggest that teens are careful observers of what parents say and do in their own relationships—only 3% of teens say they don't know their parents' values about sex.

CHART 3

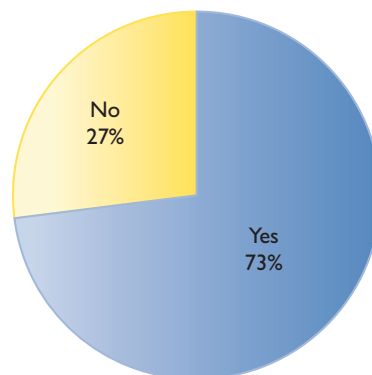
Have you had a helpful conversation with your parents/children about delaying sex and avoiding teen pregnancy?



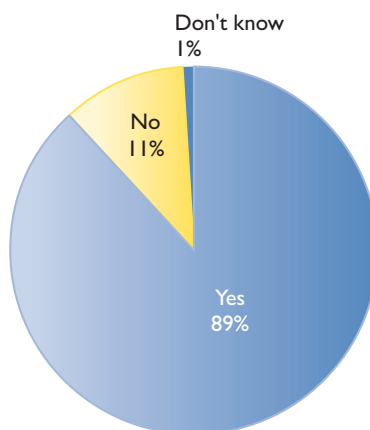
Teens (aged 12-19)



Teens (boys aged 12-19)



Teens (girls aged 12-19)



Parents of teens



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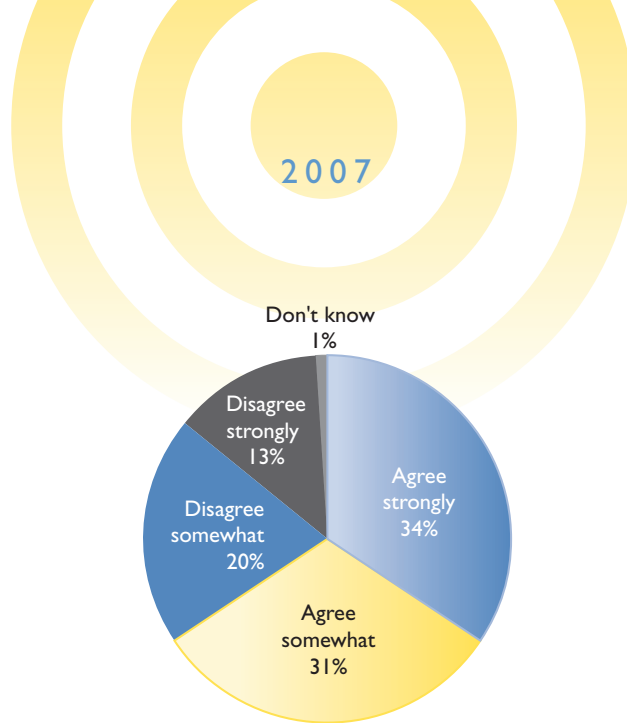
CHART 3
(continued)

Teens (aged 12-19)	2004
Yes	63
No	37

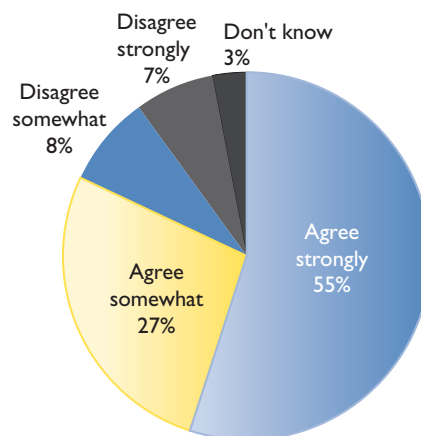
CONTEXT AND COMMENT

Teens are more likely than they were two years ago to say they have had a helpful conversation with their parents about delaying sex and avoiding teen pregnancy. Even so, parents of teens are far more likely than teens themselves to report having such conversations. For those with a gloomy perspective, it is also worth noting that about one-third of teens say they have *not* had a single helpful conversation with their parents about topics as important as delaying sex and avoiding early pregnancy.

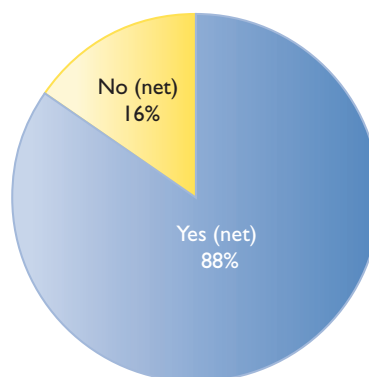
CHART 4
Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
When it comes to talking about sex, parents often don't know what to say, how to say it, or when to start.



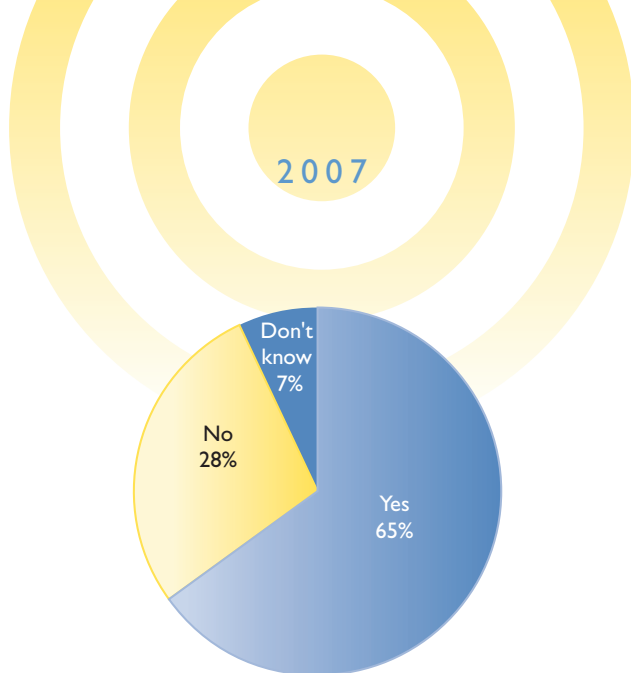
Teens (aged 12-19) [66% Agree net
33% Disagree net



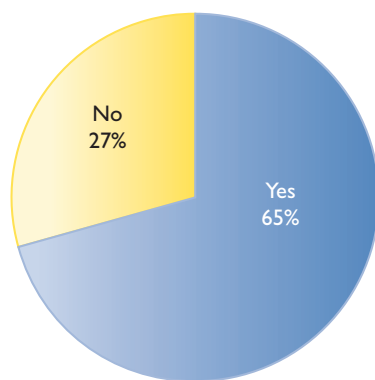
Adults [82% Agree net
15% Disagree net



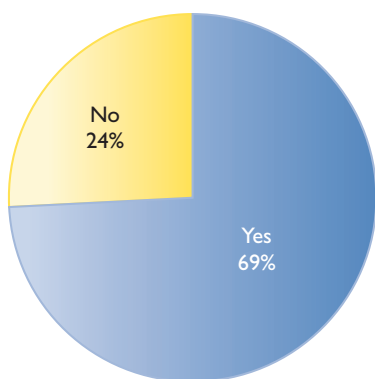
Parents of Teens



Teens (aged 12-19)



Teen boys (aged 15-19)



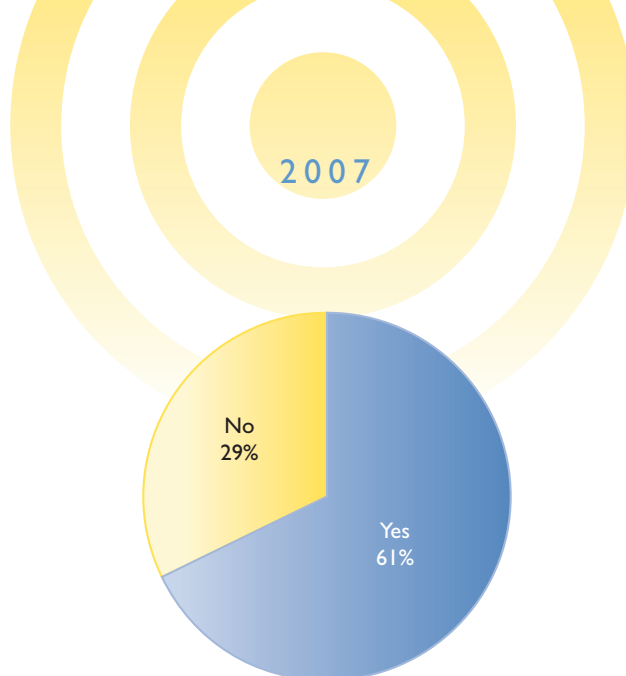
Teen girls (aged 15-19)

CHART 5

When it comes to talking about sex, do you think that parents send one message to their sons and a different message to their daughters?

Parents and Other Adults

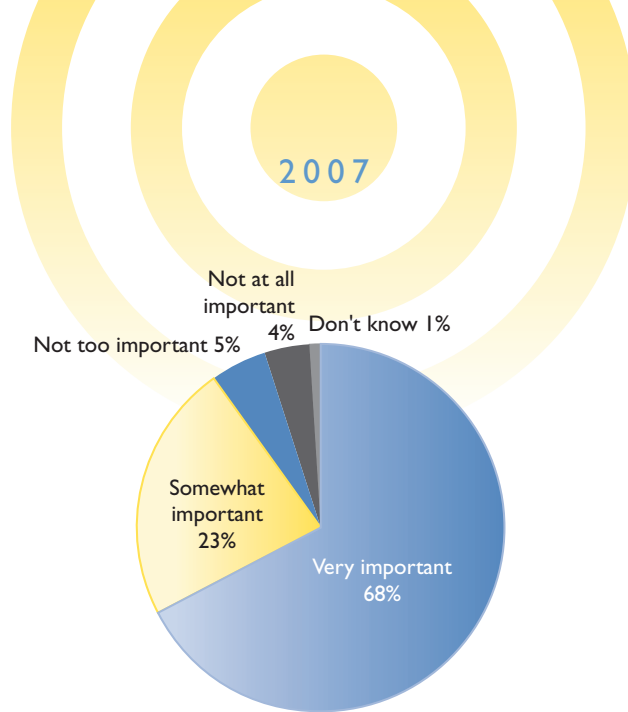
CHART 5
(continued)



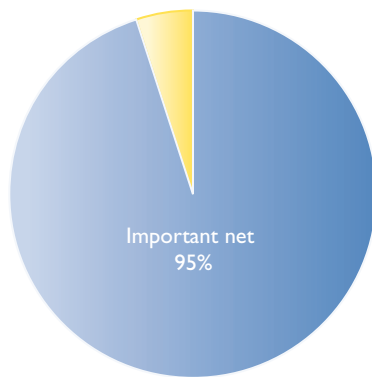
Parents of Teens

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

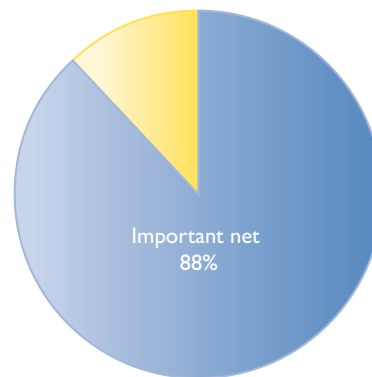
Taken together, the previous five charts provide a rather complex portrait of teens, parents, and their interactions about sex and related issues. On the one hand, teens continue to make clear that parents influence their decisions about sex more than friends, the media, or other sources; most teens say they share their parents' values about sex; and seven in ten teens say they have had a helpful conversation with their parents about delaying sex and avoiding teen pregnancy. On the other hand, parents of teens fail to grasp the depth of their influence over their teens on these issues. Moreover, when it comes to discussing sex and related issues with their children, most parents of teens overestimate the level of such conversations, admit that they send different messages to their son and daughters, and make clear that they would engage their children more often on these issues if they only knew what to say and how to say it.



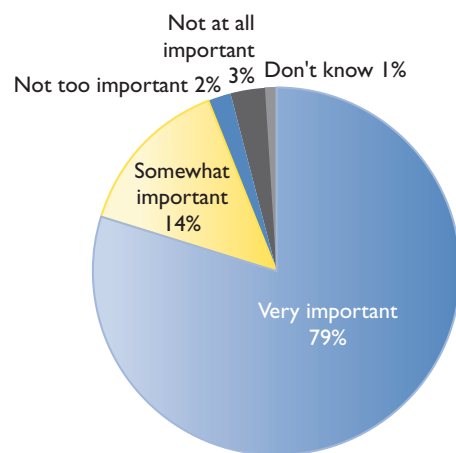
Teens (aged 12-19) [91% Agree net
9% Disagree net]



Teens (aged 12-14)



Teens (aged 15-19)



Adults [93% Agree net
5% Disagree net]

CHART 6

How important do you think it is for teens to be given a strong message that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school? Is it ...?

Abstinence and Contraception

CHART 6
(continued)

2007

Teens (aged 12-19)	2004	2003	2002	2001
Important net	94	92	93	93
Very important	67	66	72	66
Somewhat important	27	25	21	27
Not important net	6	8	7	7
Not too important	4	5	4	5
Not at all important	2	3	3	2
Don't know	*	*	*	--
Refused	*	--	--	*

Adults	2004	2003	2002
Important net	91	94	94
Very important	74	79	81
Somewhat important	17	15	12
Not important net	7	5	5
Not too important	5	3	3
Not at all important	2	2	2
Don't know	2	1	1
Refused	1	*	*

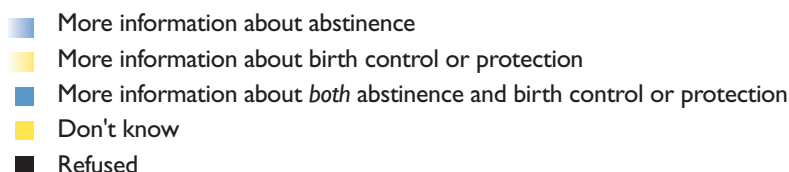
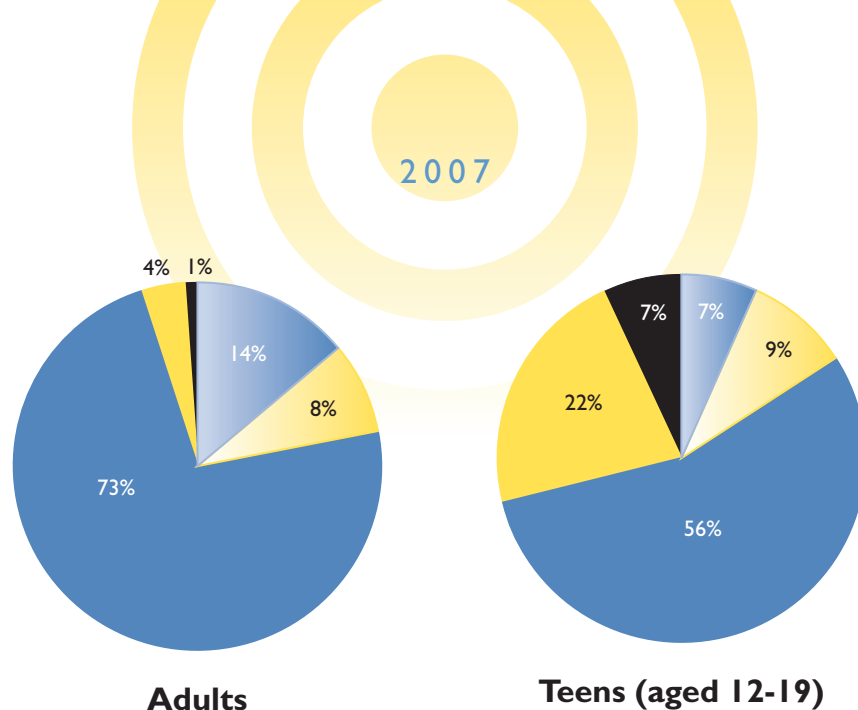


CHART 7

Do you wish you/teens were getting more information about abstinence, more information about birth control or protection, or more information about both?

	Adults	Teens (aged 12-19)
2002		
More information about abstinence	16%	10%
More information about birth control or protection	4%	12%
More information about both	76%	64%
Teens get enough information about <i>both</i> abstinence and birth control or protection	NA	NA
Don't Know	3%	7%
Refused	1%	8%

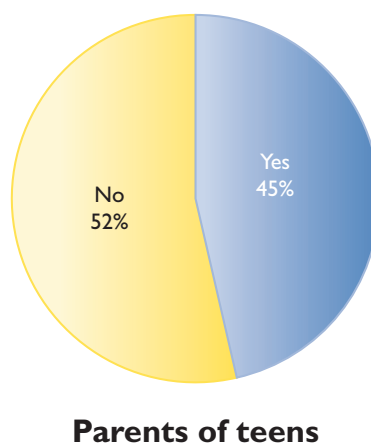
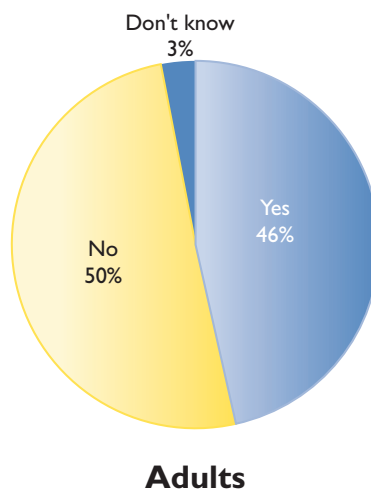
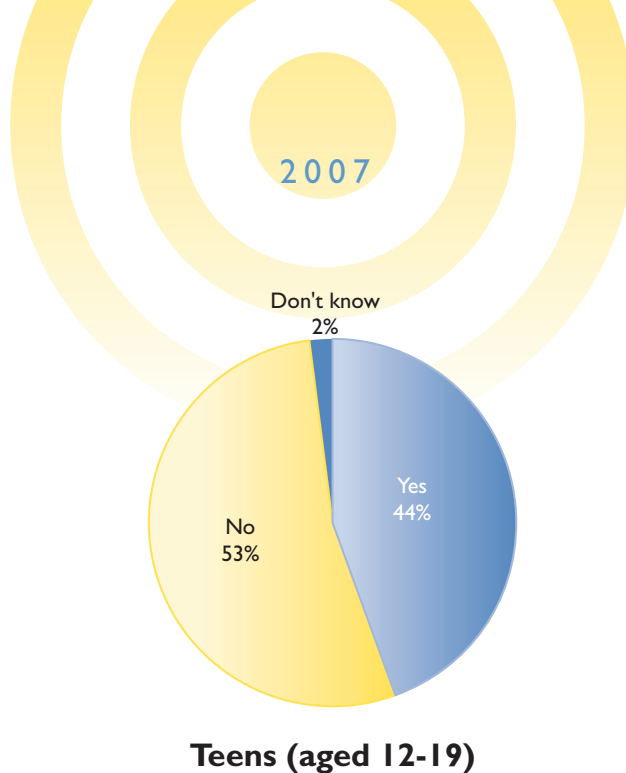
CONTEXT AND COMMENT

As shown in the previous two charts, providing young people with a strong message that they should delay having sex until they are at least out of high school continues to garner near unanimous support among adults and teens. In fact, support for such an “abstinence first” message has remained essentially unchanged since 2002.

This overwhelming support for encouraging young people to delay sex should not be misinterpreted as overwhelming support for providing young people *only* with messages about abstinence. As chart seven indicates, the clear majority of Americans surveyed believe that young people need more information about *both* abstinence and contraception rather than either/or. A surprisingly large proportion of teens (22%)—a large increase over previous years—say they do not know whether they want more information about abstinence, contraception, or both.

CHART 8

Suppose a parent or other adult tells you/a teen the following: "Don't have sex, but if you do you should use birth control or protection." Do you think this is a message that encourages you/teens to have sex?



Teens (aged 12-19)	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
2004	31	68	*	--

Adults	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
2004	41	51	7	1

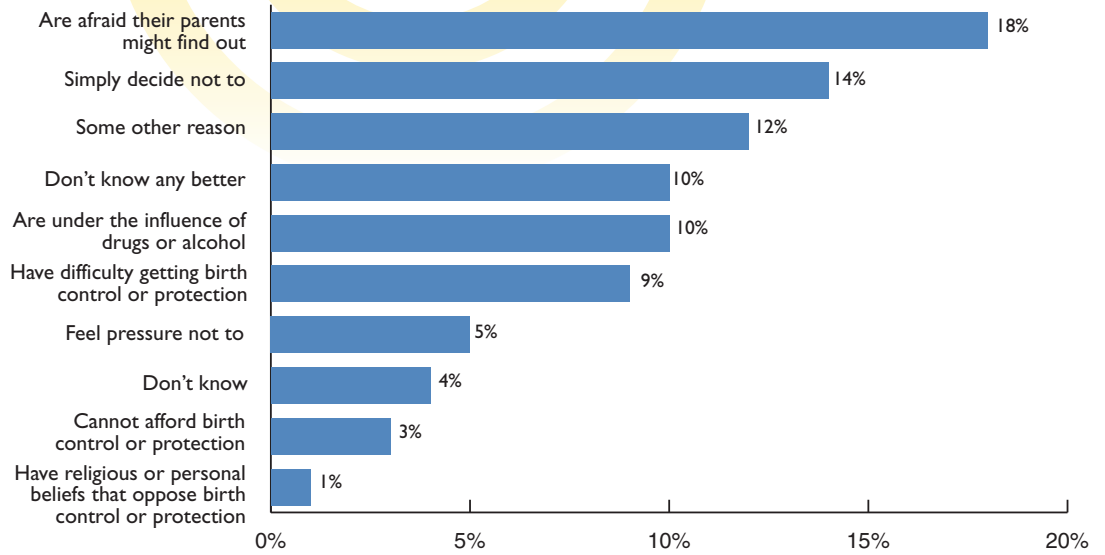
CONTEXT AND COMMENT

A common concern voiced by some advocates and parents goes something like this: encouraging young people to delay sex while also telling them to use contraception if they are sexually active sends young people a confusing, mixed message. Some argue that this sort of message might inadvertently provide young people with tacit approval, if not outright encouragement, to have sex. A slight majority of adults and teens disagree. In fact, parents of teens are slightly less likely than adults generally to believe in the “mixed message” argument. Still, the proportion of respondents—teens, in particular—who believe such a message may encourage teens to have sex has increased quite a bit since our last survey.

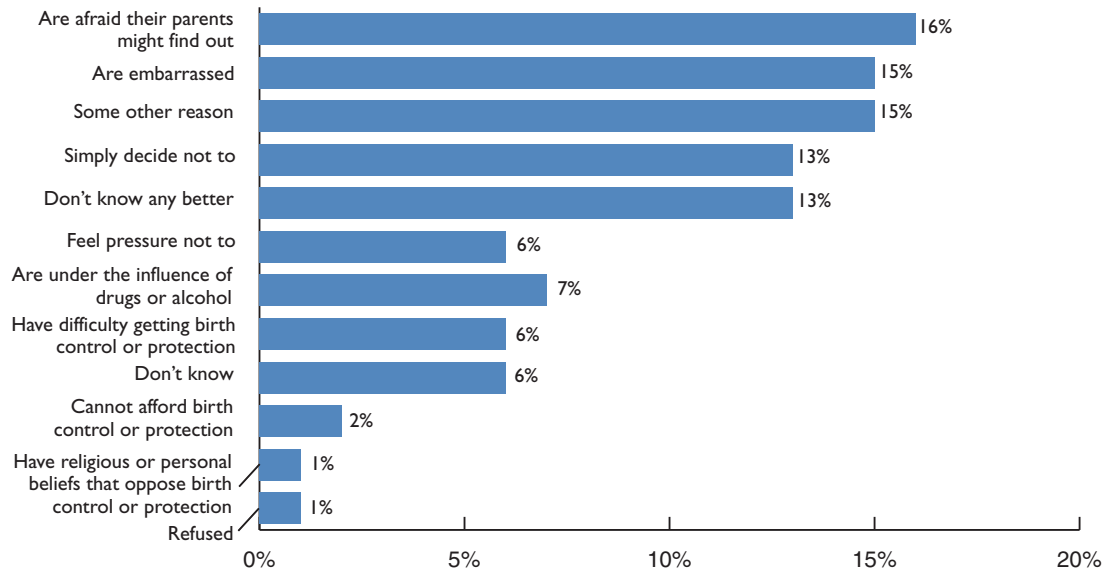
It is worth noting that a growing body of rigorous social science research indicates that sex education programs that discuss both abstinence and contraception *do not* hasten the onset of sex, increase the frequency of sex, nor increase the number of sexual partners (See *Emerging Answers* at www.teenpregnancy.org).

CHART 9

What do you think is the main reason teens do not use birth control or protection when they have sex? Is it because they...?



Teens (aged 12-19)



Adults

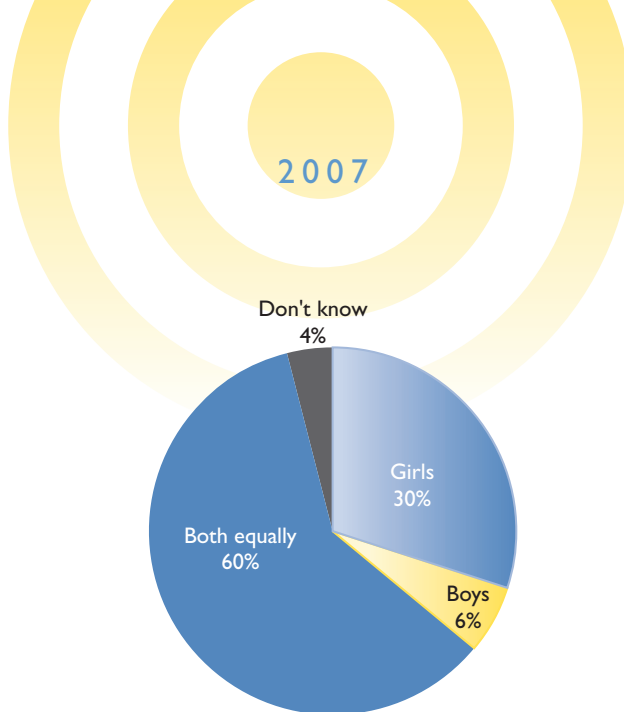
CONTEXT AND COMMENT

Teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States have declined by one-third since the early 1990s. Despite this impressive progress, it is still the case that three in ten girls in this country get pregnant by age 20 and that the United States continues to have higher rates of teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion than other comparable countries. Our outlier position underscores the critical importance of understanding why sexually active teens do not use contraception consistently and carefully. Results from this survey and others suggest that there is no single answer to this important question. Both teens and adults believe there are many reasons why teens do not use contraception, from being embarrassed, to being under the influence, to simply making a decision not to.

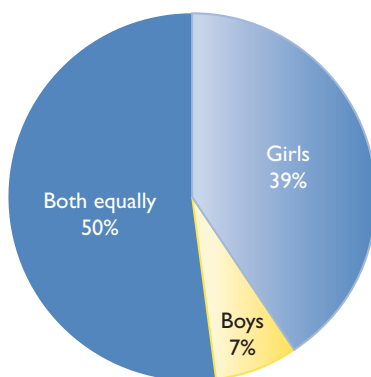
Both adults and teens agree, though, the primary reason sexually active teens do not use contraception is because they are afraid their parents might find out. Teen respondents to this survey are also *less* likely than is perhaps commonly believed to cite difficulty getting contraception or affordability as reasons young people do not use contraception.

CHART 10

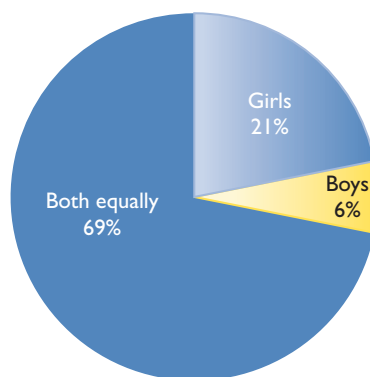
Who usually decides whether or not birth control or protection is used? Is it girls, boys, or both equally?



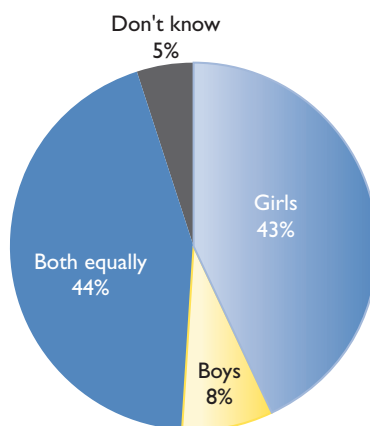
Teens (aged 12-19)



Teen girls (aged 12-19)



Teen boys (aged 12-19)



Adults

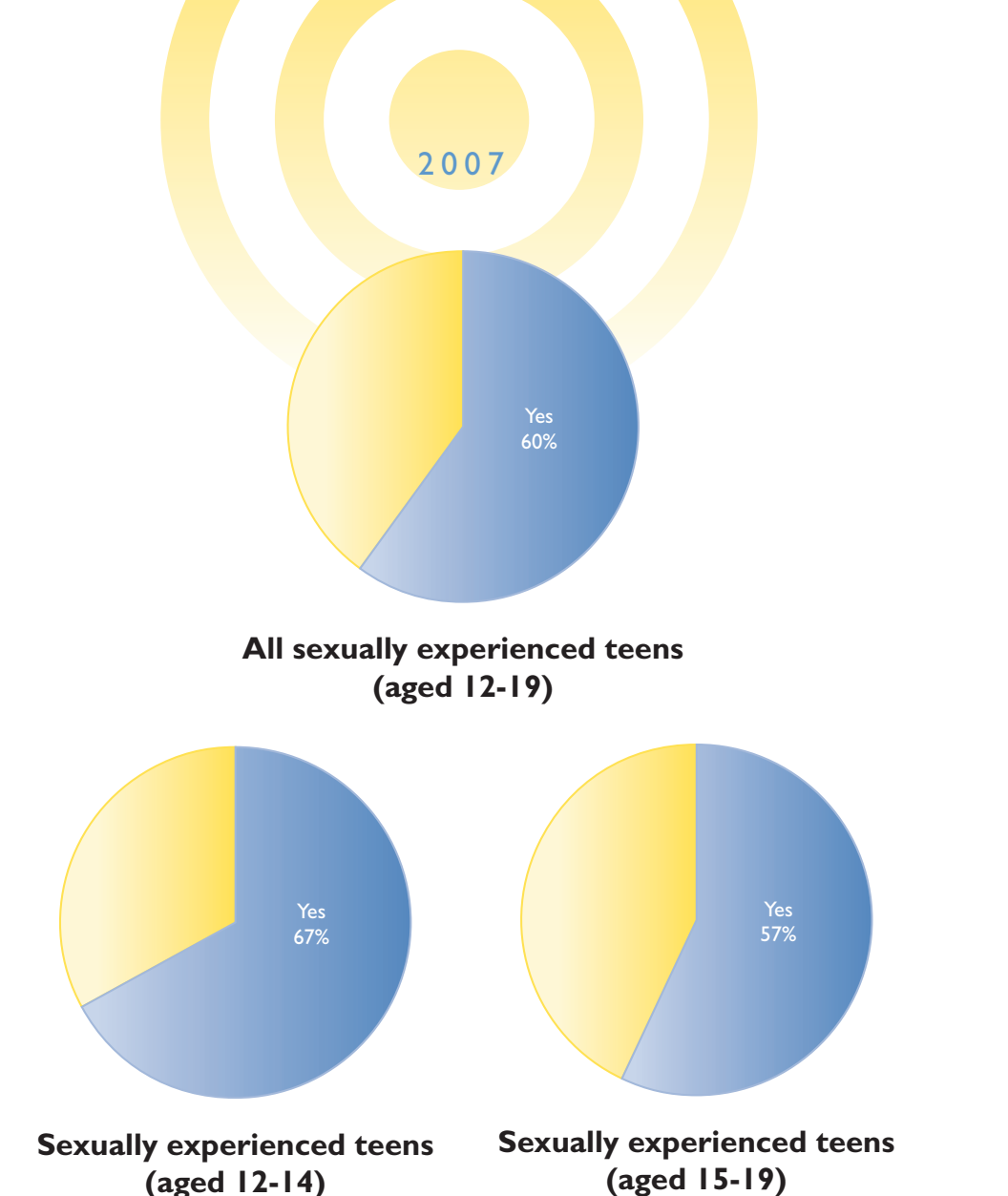
CONTEXT AND COMMENT

Teen boys and girls do not fully agree on who makes the decisions about using contraception. While most teens agree that it is a responsibility shared equally between partners, many teens (four in ten girls and one in five boys) say that girls usually decide whether contraception is used. Very few teens actually believe that boys usually decide whether contraception is used.

For their part, adults are *far* more likely than teen boys or girls to say that girls make decisions about contraception. One uncharitable interpretation of this finding is that a sort of sexual double standard remains alive and well. That is, for nearly half of adults, pregnancy and its prevention remains primarily a girls' problem. A more charitable interpretation is that many adults believe young women *must* be in charge of their own destiny (after all, only girls get pregnant), should not rely on their partner, and, therefore, *should* be responsible for making decisions about contraception.

CHART 11

If you have had sexual intercourse, do you wish you had waited longer?

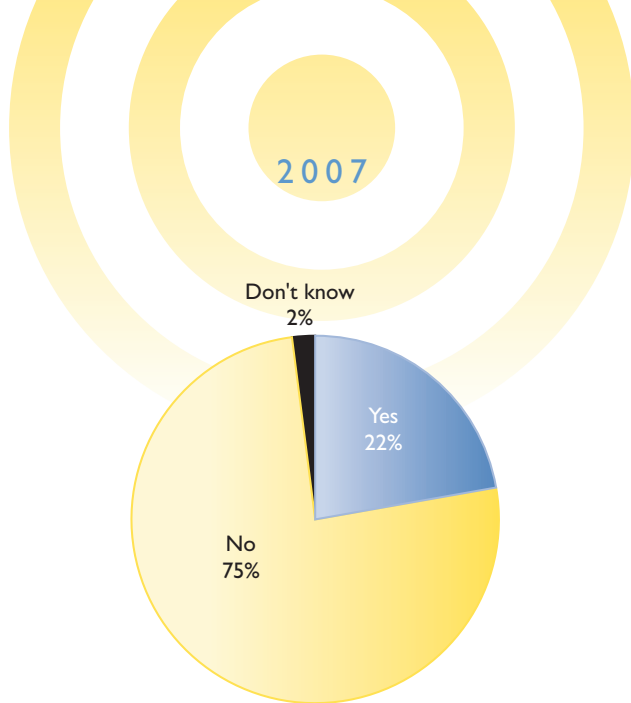


All sexually experienced teens (aged 12-19)

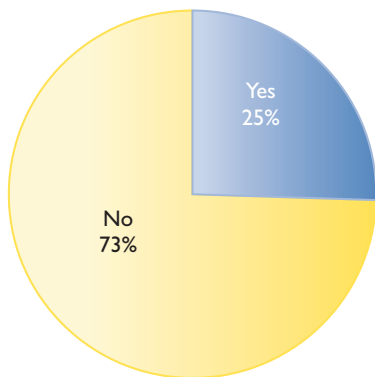
	2004	2003	2002
Yes	66	67	63

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

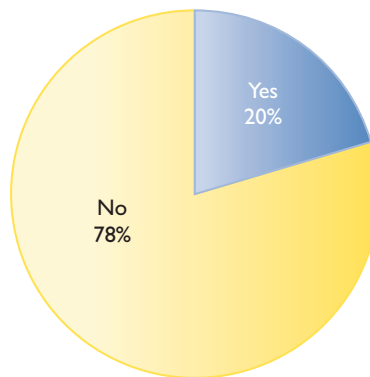
About half of the teens in this survey say they have not had sexual intercourse—a finding consistent with respected behavioral surveys such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Survey of Family Growth and Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Of those who report having had sex, about two-thirds say they wish they had waited longer. The proportion of sexually experienced teens who regret having sex when they did has remained almost unchanged over the years.



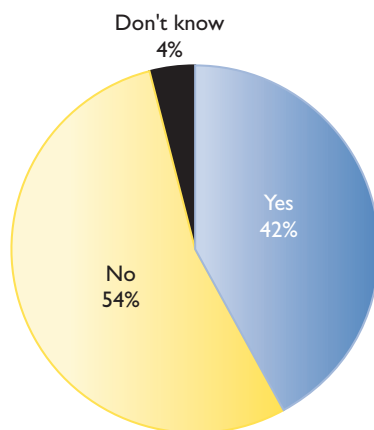
Teens (aged 12-19)



**Teen boys
(aged 12-19)**



**Teen girls
(aged 12-19)**



Adults

CHART 12

Do you think it is embarrassing for teens to admit that they are virgins?

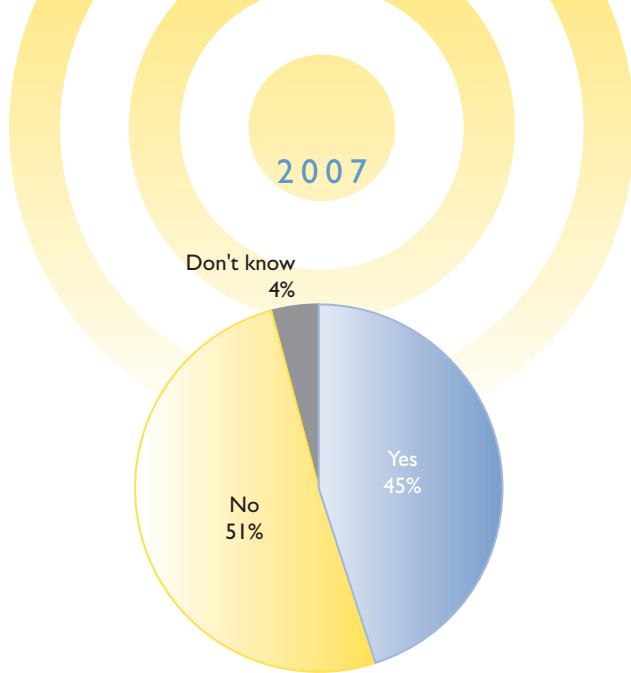
*Regret, Virginity, Older Partners,
and Attitudes about Teen Sex*

CHART 12
(continued)

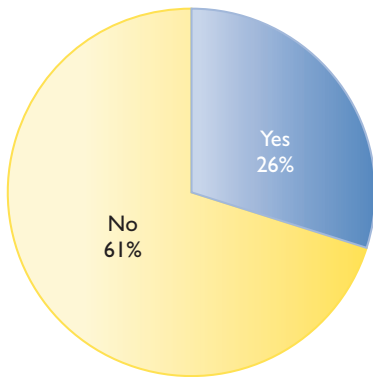
2007

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

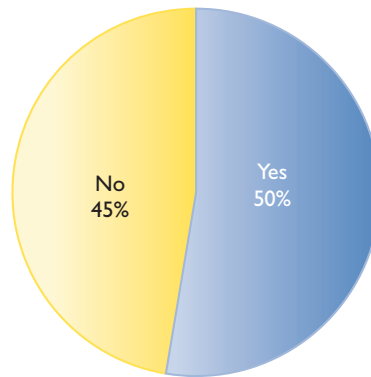
Adults are almost twice as likely as young people themselves to believe that it is embarrassing for teens to admit their virginity—another indication that adults are often in the dark about the sexual attitudes and behavior of teens. Other examples? We have already seen that parents underestimate the influence they have in helping shape teens' decisions about sex. It is also the case that many parents are simply not aware that their teenagers have had sex. Only about one third of parents of sexually experienced 14-year-olds believe that their child has had sex and about 50% of parents of sexually experienced 8th-11th graders were aware that their sons and/or daughters had started to have sex (see *Parent Power* at www.teenpregnancy.org).



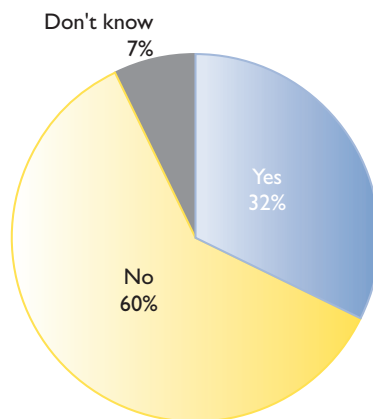
Teens (aged 12-19)



Teens (aged 12-14)



Teens (aged 15-19)



Adults

CHART 13

Do you think it is okay for teens to be in a relationship with someone three or more years older?

Regret, Virginity, Older Partners, and Attitudes about Teen Sex

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

Research shows that relationships between those aged 12-14 and a partner who is older by two, three, or more years—compared to relationships with someone only slightly older, the same age, or younger—are much more likely to include sexual intercourse. For example, 13% of same-age relationships among those aged 12-14 include sexual intercourse. If the partner is two years older, 26% of the relationships include sex. If the partner is three or more years older, 33% of the relationships include sex (see *14 and Younger* at www.teenpregnancy.org).

Even so, about half of teens overall—including one-quarter of young people aged 12-14—believe it is okay to be in a relationship with someone three or more years older. That a significant proportion of teens hold a rather casual attitude about relationship age differences should give pause to parents and others concerned about early sexual activity and pregnancy.

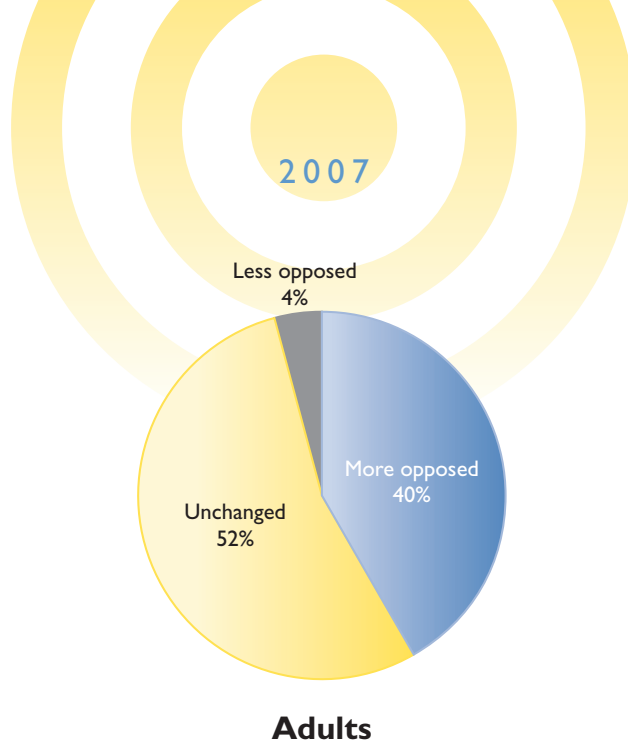


CHART 14

When it comes to teens having sex, over the past several years, would you say that you have become more opposed, less opposed, or remained unchanged in your views?

Adults

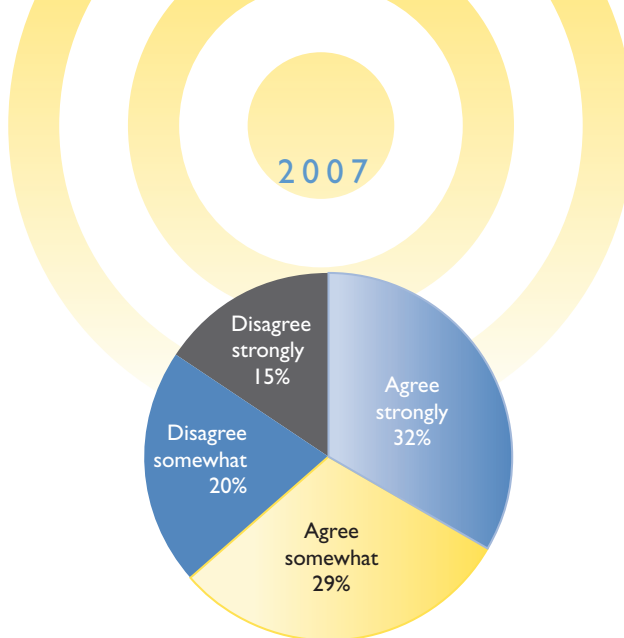
	More opposed	Less opposed	Unchanged
2003	32%	6%	59%
2002	33%	5%	59%

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

After remaining unchanged for a couple years, a larger proportion of adults now say they have become more opposed to teens having sex over the past several years.

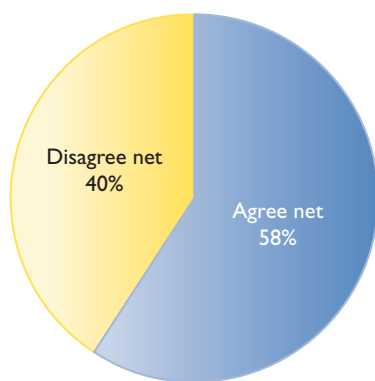
CHART 15

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Teen boys often receive the message that they are expected to have sex?

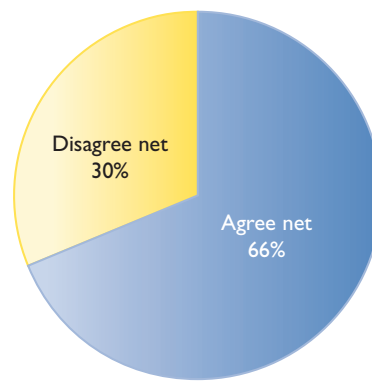


Teens (aged 12-19)

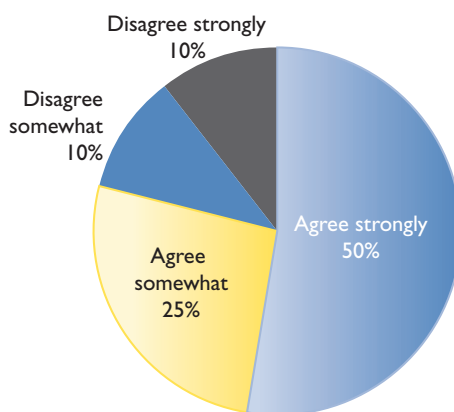
[61% Agree net
35% Disagree net



Teen boys
(aged 12-19)

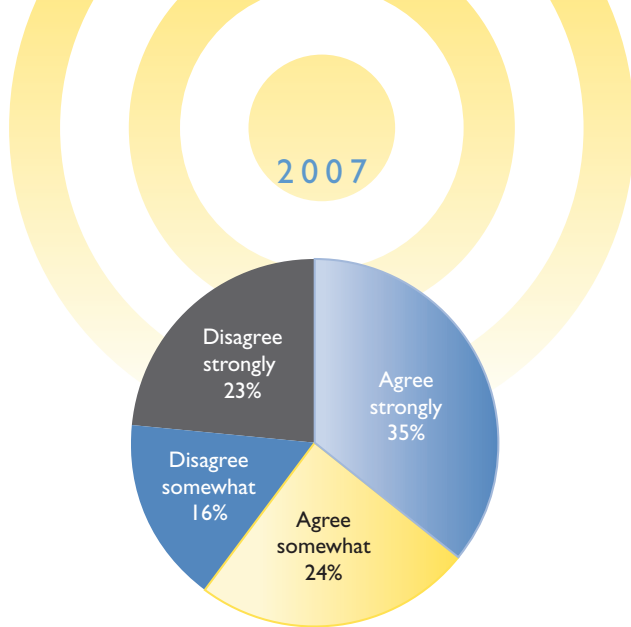


Teen girls
(aged 12-19)



Adults

[75% Agree net
20% Disagree net

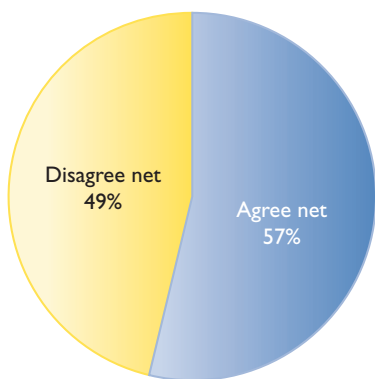


Teens (aged 12-19)

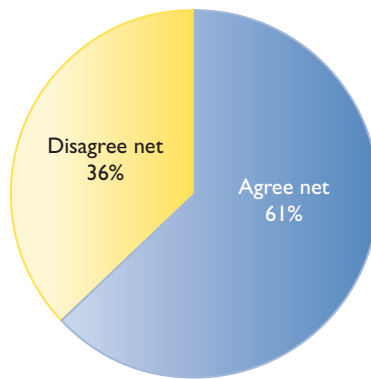
59% Agree net
39% Disagree net

CHART 16

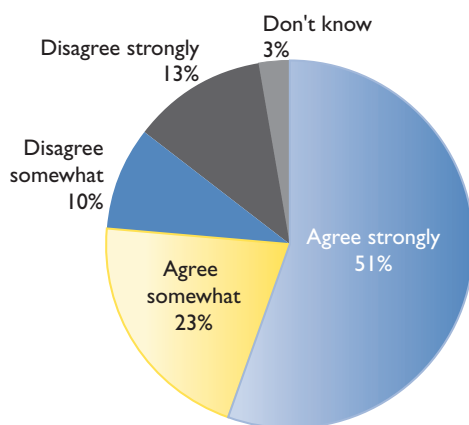
Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Teen girls often receive the message that attracting boys and looking sexy is one of the most important things they can do?



Teen girls (aged 12-19)



Teen boys (aged 12-19)



Adults

74% Agree net
23% Disagree net

CHART 16
(continued)

2007

Teens (aged 12-19) 2004

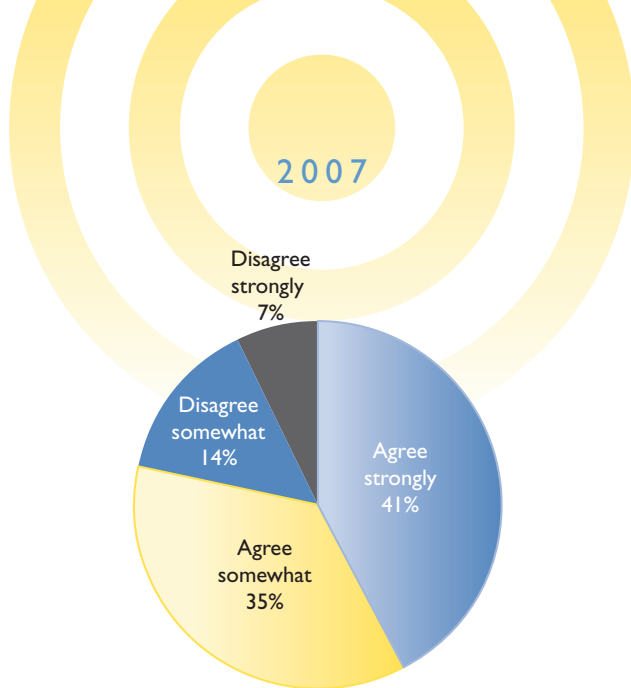
Agree net	65
Agree strongly	39
Agree somewhat	26
Disagree net	33
Disagree strongly	16
Disagree somewhat	17
Don't know	

Adults 2004

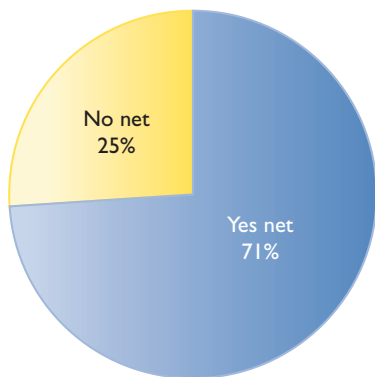
Agree net	79
Agree strongly	58
Agree somewhat	21
Disagree net	17
Disagree strongly	10
Disagree somewhat	7
Don't know	2
Refused	1

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

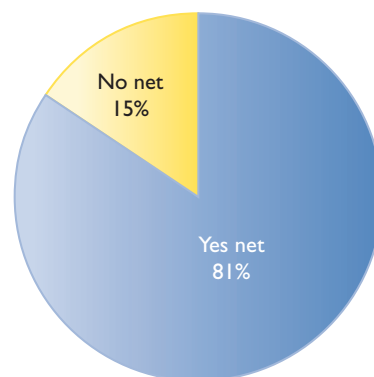
It is nearly impossible to interpret the data in the two previous charts as anything but discouraging. If six in ten teens continue to believe that girls often receive the message that looking sexy and attracting boys is one of the most important things they can do while boys get the message that they are *expected* to have sex, it is clear that we as a culture have a lot more work to do on behalf of teens.



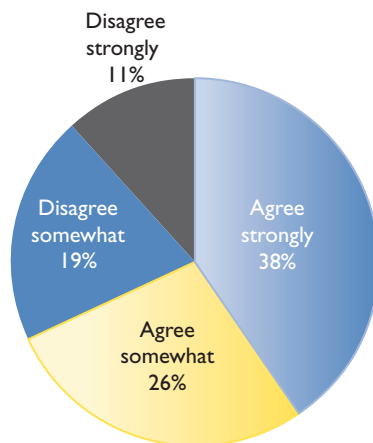
Teens (aged 12-19) [76% Agree net
21% Disagree net



Teen boys (aged 12-19)



Teen girls (aged 12-19)



Adults [64% Agree net
30% Disagree net

CHART 17

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Religious leaders and groups should be doing more to help prevent teen pregnancy?*

Gender Differences

CHART 17
(continued)

2007

Teens (aged 12-19) 2004

Agree net	71
Agree strongly	37
Agree somewhat	34
Disagree net	27
Disagree strongly	10
Disagree somewhat	17
Don't know	

Adults 2004

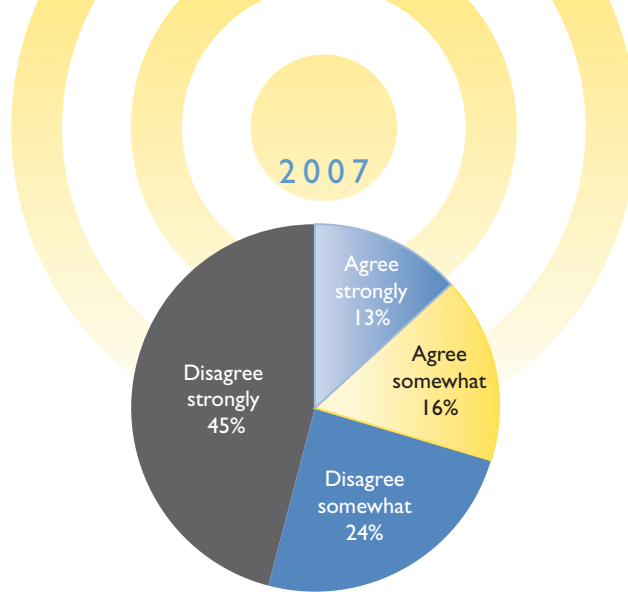
Agree net	65
Agree strongly	39
Agree somewhat	26
Disagree net	30
Disagree strongly	14
Disagree somewhat	16

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

The results presented here, as well as in previous research done by the National Campaign and other organizations, make clear that teens' own sense of right and wrong and their religious beliefs play important roles in their decisions about sex. Our survey this year suggests that this influence is particularly strong among teen girls.

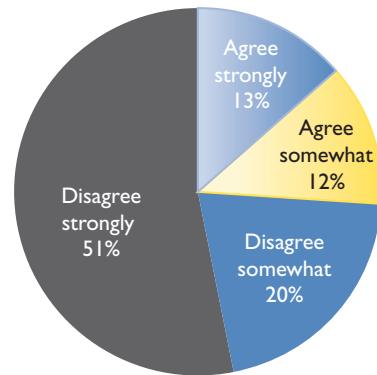
At least two conclusions can be drawn from these findings. First, it is clear that most young people make decisions about sex based not just on what is safe but also on what they believe is right. Second, there is a real opportunity for religious leaders and faith communities to do more to help young people on this front—based on the strong support of adults and growing interest of teens.

Visit www.teenpregnancy.org/religion for more information on the role of faith and how religious leaders can help.



Teens (aged 12-19)

29% Agree net
69% Disagree net



Adults

25% Agree net
71% Disagree net

CHART 18

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Teen pregnancy and parenthood in my community is no big deal.*

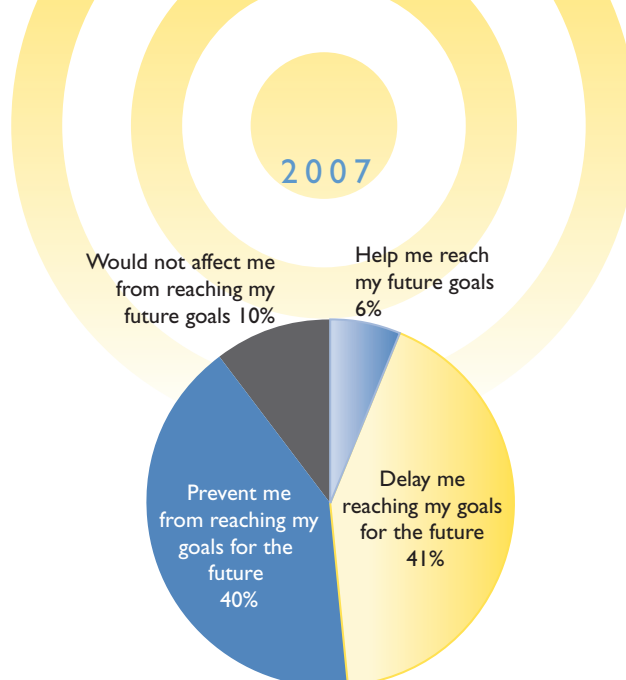
CONTEXT AND COMMENT

Some have suggested that one of the reasons why the rate of teen pregnancy in the United States remains so high when compared to other fully industrialized countries is because we lack a clear social norm that teen pregnancy and parenthood are in no one's best interest. The data presented here lend support to that argument. One-quarter of adults and nearly one-third of teens believe that teen pregnancy and parenthood in their own communities are "no big deal," which, in turn, suggests an unwillingness among adults—and the culture generally—to take a clear stand on whether teen pregnancy is or is not okay.

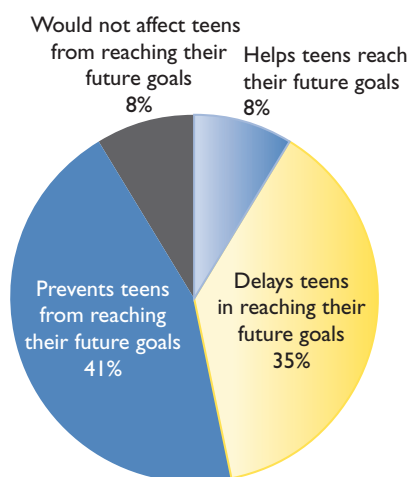
This may simply reflect that there are not a lot of teen pregnancies in certain communities. It may also reflect a queasiness among adults about "imposing" one's values on another; it may also reflect a culture that has become increasingly tolerant of unwed pregnancy and childbearing; or it may reflect a concern that taking a strong stand against teen pregnancy and childbearing will offend those teens who are already pregnant or parenting, or might somehow stigmatize the children of teen mothers. Whatever the reason, if adults and teens do not view teen pregnancy as clearly undesirable, we should not be surprised by continued high rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing in the United States.

CHART 19

Do you think that being a teen parent would...?



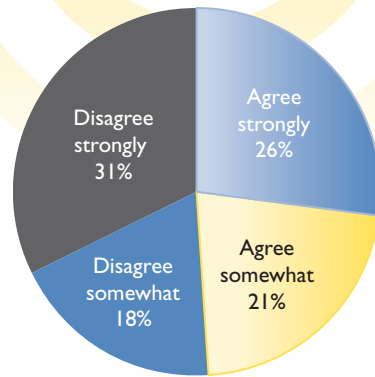
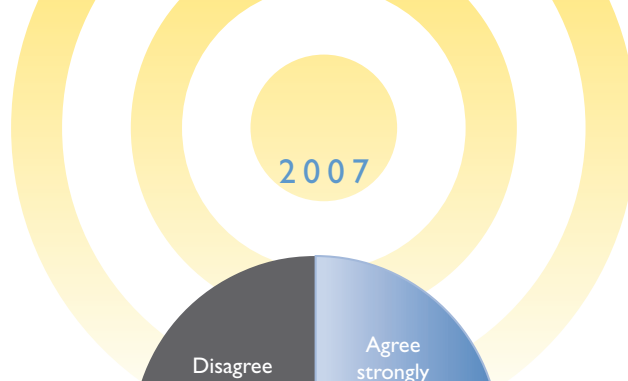
Teens (aged 12-19)



Adults

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

Conventional wisdom suggests that most teens actively try to avoid getting pregnant or causing a pregnancy. While it is true that about eight in ten teen pregnancies are unintended, this tends to mask the significant minority of teens who actively *want* to get pregnant (or get someone pregnant), or are relatively ambivalent about early pregnancy. Significant proportions of teens and adults (16%) believe that being a teen parent would *help* teens reach their goals for the future or would *not affect* young people one way or another. It is also worth noting that teens and adults are almost equally split on whether being a teen parent is likely to *delay* or *prevent* young people from reaching their future goals.

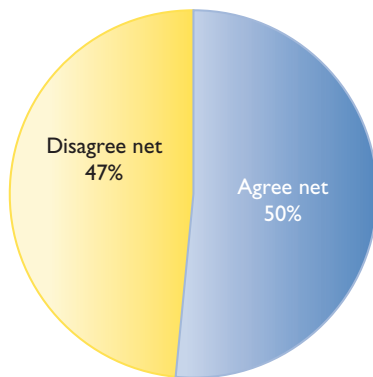


Teens (aged 12-19)

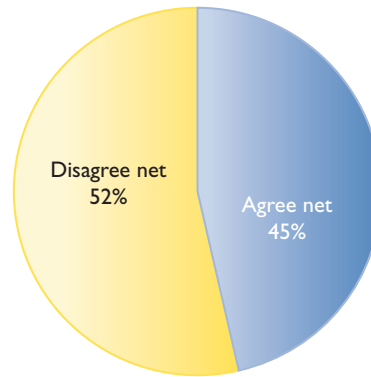
47% Agree net
49% Disagree net

CHART 20

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
I have never really thought about what my life would be like if I (got pregnant/ got someone pregnant) as a teen.*



Teen boys (aged 12-19)



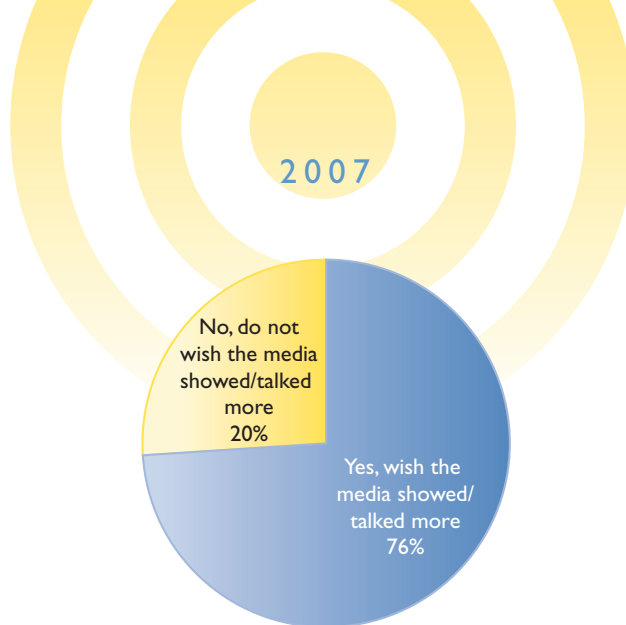
Teen girls (aged 12-19)

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

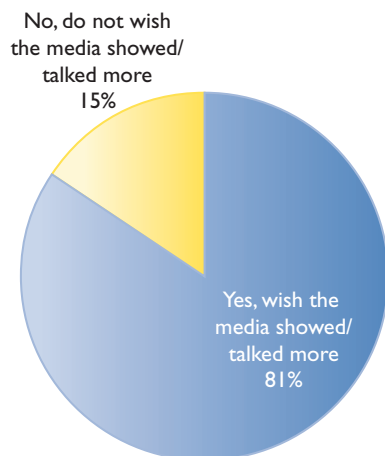
The three previous charts provide a sober reminder why the U.S. teen pregnancy rate remains startlingly high. Significant proportions of adults and teens do not view teen pregnancy as a big deal. Many believe that being a teen parent would *not* hinder—and might even help—young people from reaching their future goals and about half of teens say they have never really given any serious thought about how teen pregnancy and parenthood might affect their lives.

CHART 21

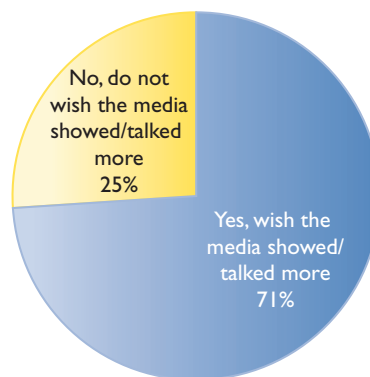
Do you wish the media showed more or talked more about the consequences of sex, including teen pregnancy?



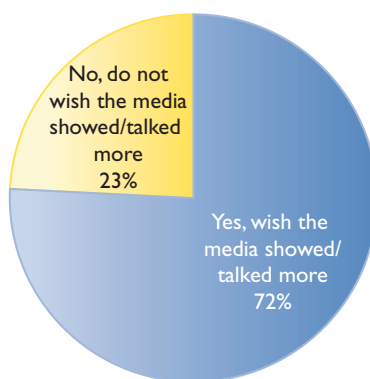
Teens (aged 12-19)



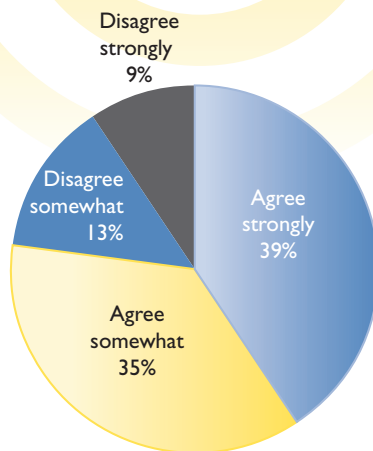
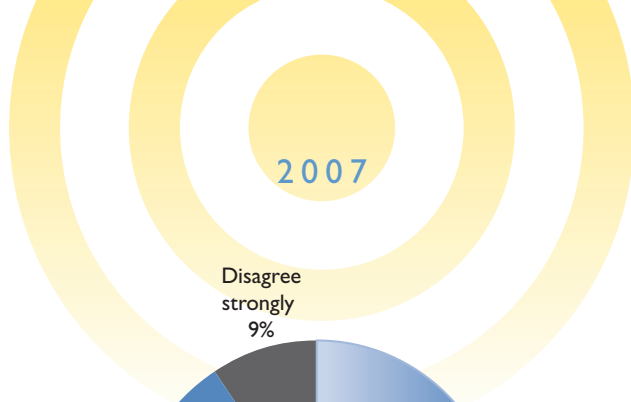
Teen girls (aged 12-19)



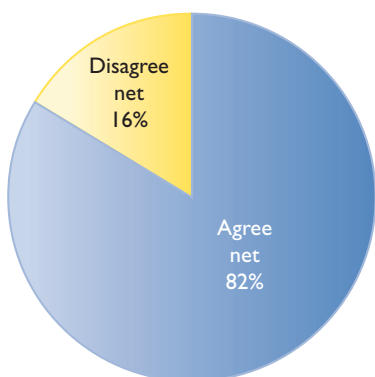
Teen boys (aged 12-19)



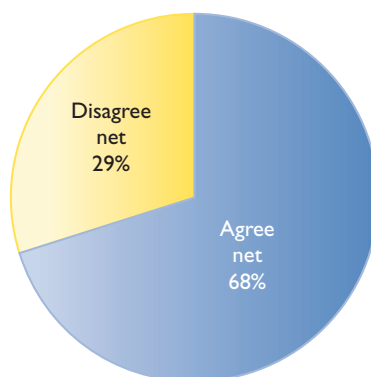
Adults



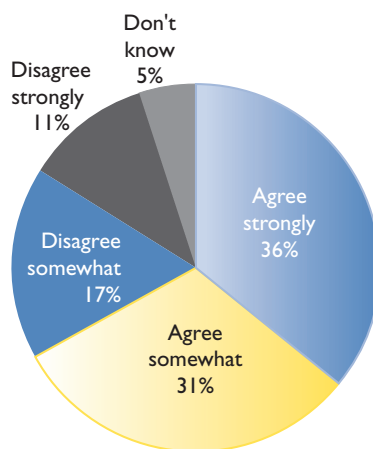
Teens (aged 12-19) [74% Agree net
22% Disagree net



Teen girls (aged 12-19)



Teen boys (aged 12-19)



Adults [67% Agree net
28% Disagree net

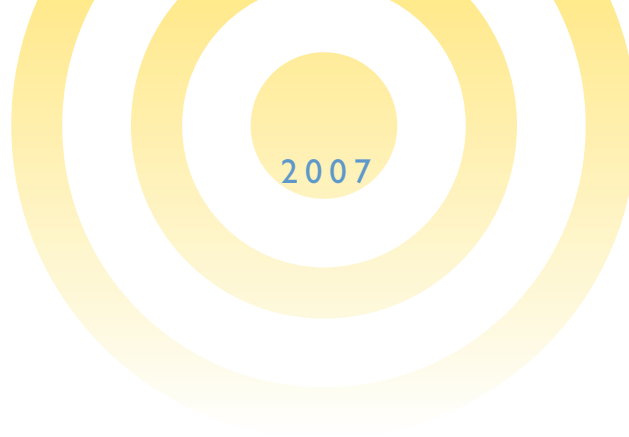
CHART 22

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
When a TV show or character I like deals with teen pregnancy, it makes me think more about the consequences of sex.*

CONTEXT AND COMMENT

It comes as no surprise that teens lead media-saturated lives. Young people spend an average of 6.5 hours a day—over 44.5 hours a week—with media (see *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year Olds* at www.kff.org). Nor does it stretch the limits of credulity to believe that all this media time—what teens are watching, reading, and listening to—may influence their sexual attitudes and behavior. But what may be surprising is that three-quarters of teens overall (including 81% of girls and 71% of boys) and adults want the media to give more attention to the *consequences* of sex. Moreover, two-thirds of teens overall (82% of girls and 68% of boys) and adults say that TV shows and characters make them think about the consequences of sex. Clearly, these findings suggest that the media can be a powerful educational tool for teens and can help parents begin discussions with their children about sexual behavior, values, relationships, and related issues.





2007





The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization supported largely by private donations. The National Campaign's mission is to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families by reducing teen pregnancy. Our goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third between 2006 and 2015.

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